

DIGITAL CERTIFICATE

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A digital certificate includes framing characters defining a protected area. The protected
5 area contains a selected set of components, including text-based components and binary-based
components, and the certificate serves as a transport container for such components. A message
digest or hashing algorithm applied to the protected area provides consistent results despite
modifications to the certificate outside the protected area. A digital signature provides
authentication of source and content integrity. Digital certificates under the present invention
10 may be applied to a variety of purposes including but not limited to proof of ownership, gift
certificates, upgrade purchases, and other applications where verification of source and content
integrity are desirable.